

Penn-Northwest **DIGEST**

Moving Mercer County, PA forward



From the Desk of Jane Goniea



Welcome to the Winter edition of the Penn-Northwest Digest, our quarterly digital publication dedicated to keeping our region informed about the progress and momentum driving Mercer County forward! In each issue, we highlight what makes Mercer County, PA a great place to live, learn, work, and play, while providing updates on key economic development initiatives across the county.

This edition shines a spotlight on Grove City, the very place that brought me to Mercer County back in 2021. As an alumni of Grove City College, I've followed the renovations of Rockwell Hall and the search for a new president with interest and nostalgia for my student days. The college and the borough continue to grow, with new renovations, a new water treatment plant, and new developments at Hall Industries.

Penn-Northwest is growing too! As we reflect on 2024, we celebrate our successes and challenge ourselves to reach new heights in 2025. As Editor-in-Chief, I remain committed to producing a Digest worth reading—one that informs, inspires, and showcases the best of our community.

We hope you enjoy this fourth edition of the Penn-Northwest Digest. If you have a story idea or feature suggestion for a future issue, we'd love to hear from you! There are so many great stories to tell about this place we call home.

Jane Goniea, Editor-in-Chief

Penn-Northwest Digest

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Penn-Northwest
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Affordable Solutions For Corporate Expansion

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Grove City College

Grove City Borough

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Guthrie Theatre in downtown Grove City by Adegroff, available under Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/74/Downtown_Grove_City_Pennsylvania.jpg/1920px-Downtown_Grove_City_Pennsylvania.jpg.

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About Penn-Northwest

We are the lead economic development organization that assists Mercer County's plans for growth. We envision an economically diverse, self-sustaining group of communities where business and employment opportunities exist, all types of education and recreational opportunities are present, and economic prosperity can be reached by all residents of Mercer County.

Grove City College Continues Impact 150 Campaign and Presidential Search



By Anna Kavulla
Photography by Grove City College

Less than three months after Grove City College announced its Impact 150 fundraising campaign, President McNulty announced his retirement at the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. These two announcements aren't the only big things happening on campus—from building developments to a strong football season, Grove City College continues to push for bigger and better things.

The Impact 150 campaign, announced on May 19th, 2024, has a goal of raising \$185 million ahead of the college's 150th anniversary in 2026.

"The Impact 150 campaign is perfectly named for what it sets out to do. After 150 years of providing high-quality education, the campaign is an opportunity for those impacted by the college to give back in a meaningful way to provide for another 150 years of students," said college senior Connor Rodgers. "As a current student, I am blessed to be able

to experience the product that comes from nearly 150 years of a high-quality institution."

The money raised throughout this campaign will be invested in student scholarships, financial aid, and building renovations, beginning with the Rockwell Hall of Science. Rockwell, which will be renamed Smith Hall of Science and Technology after alumnus William W. Smith Jr. '69 and his wife Dieva Smith, will be connected to the neighboring STEM Hall, and its interior will undergo an almost complete

renovation to suit the needs of its students and faculty.

"Watching the construction happening on campus serves as a reminder that I go to a college where the administration is actively pursuing ways to better my experience as a student and cares about providing myself and my peers the resources we need to receive a high-quality education," said college junior Emily Fox of the remodel. A flyer released by the college details the project, which will add 11,000 SF of new usable space and renovate 49,600 SF of existing space, for a total of 66,500 SF that can be utilized by students and faculty alike.

While the Impact 150 Campaign is underway, the College is also in the process of searching for

new leadership. After over a decade of dedicated service, President Paul J. McNulty announced his retirement. As McNulty steps down, he leaves behind a thriving campus, a strong academic community, and a lasting impact on the lives of students, faculty, and alumni alike. His retirement marks the culmination of a distinguished career, but it also sets the stage for new leadership to take the college into the next phase of its journey. This hiring decision is crucial to the campus community, especially the student body.

Rodgers hopes that the new president will mirror past leadership. "The new president should embody the same personable qualities as President McNulty. Being approachable, building strong relationships with students, and maintain-

ing a commitment to the college's values are essential for effective leadership."

Fox echoes this statement, saying, "My hope is that the college will choose a president who genuinely cares as much about the students and the college as McNulty has over the past 11 years." Throughout both the Impact 150 Campaign and the search for a president, Grove City College continues to have a transformative influence on the campus community and the valley at large.



Rod and Jake Discuss the Future of Penn-Northwest

By Jane Goniea

In January, Penn-Northwest Development Corporation (PNDC) announced an expansion of its leadership team, bringing Director of Workforce Development Jake Rickert into a larger strategic role as Associate Executive Director.

As PNDC continues to grow and evolve, Executive Director Rod Wilt has been focusing on strengthening the leadership structure to ensure long-term sustainability. With an increased focus on major economic development projects, workforce growth, and business expansion, this move allows Jake to take on a greater leadership presence while continuing to advance workforce initiatives.

Rod and Jake sat down to discuss what this transition means for Penn-Northwest's future and the economic development landscape in Mercer County.

What do you hope to accomplish with this leadership transition?

Rod: Great organizations don't stand still—they grow, they adapt, and they empower their people to lead. I believe the strongest leaders delegate and



create opportunities for the next generation of leadership to thrive.

Jake brings a military leadership background, a deep understanding of workforce development, and a passion for Mercer County. His role is expanding to include day-to-day operational leadership while continuing to drive workforce initiatives. I see this as a natural progression that allows Penn-Northwest to be even more responsive to businesses, workforce needs, and economic growth opportunities.

Jake: For me, this isn't a change in leadership, but rather an expansion of our ability to serve the community. Our mission stays the same—to support local businesses, drive economic growth, and create a stronger Mercer County.



With this expanded leadership structure, we can increase engagement with businesses, expand workforce partnerships, and be even more accessible to our stakeholders. I'm excited to take on a greater leadership role while continuing to support the great work that Rod and our entire team have built here at Penn-Northwest.

How does this strengthen Penn-Northwest?

Rod: Organizations become stronger when leaders develop and step into expanded roles. Bringing Jake into this position ensures continuity and allows us to scale our efforts. He'll be a bigger part of staff meetings, strategic planning, and overall decision-making, helping shape the next phase of growth for Mercer County.

Jake: Penn-Northwest is growing, both in impact and outreach. Expanding the leadership team allows us to engage more deeply with businesses, workforce partners, and economic development initiatives. With more touchpoints in the community, we can provide better support to businesses and job creators, ensuring Mercer County remains competitive.

What exciting new plans are in store for 2025?

Rod: We're expecting more loan activity, larger economic development projects, and continued expansion of our micro-loan program. The seeds for many of these initiatives were planted years ago, and now we're seeing them come to fruition. The Mercer County Innovation Fund will also play a key role in supporting entrepreneurs and business growth.

Jake: My focus is on expanding workforce development services and helping local businesses scale. One of the most exciting things about economic development is seeing a

business go from one employee to five, to fifty, and beyond. Looking ahead, we want to increase member engagement, strengthen our partnerships with elected officials, launch new programs, and be the best collaborative partner possible for businesses in Mercer County.

Looking back at progress in 2024, is there anything you're particularly proud of?

Rod: Penn-Northwest has continued to grow revenues, invest in people and projects, and deliver real economic impact. We've been able to bring our comprehensive economic development strategy to every corner of Mercer County. And we're doing it efficiently and responsibly, as confirmed by our independent audits. That should give the community confidence in what we're building here.

Jake: The collaborative spirit of Mercer County. As board member Nathan Koble says, we continue to punch above our weight. This community

comes together, finds solutions, and makes things happen. That's what makes Mercer County special.

Any other thoughts?

Rod: As Penn-Northwest celebrates 40 years in 2025, we're focused on positioning Mercer County for the next 40 years. That means embracing collaboration, innovation, and new ideas—because that's what will keep Mercer County competitive and thriving.

Jake: Economic development is about building communities where people want to live, work, and raise their families. I couldn't be more excited to help drive that vision for Mercer County's future. It's a great time to 'Make it in Mercer County!'

Adapted from an interview with Rod Wilt and Jake Rickert of Penn-Northwest Development Corporation. The extended video interview can be viewed on Penn-Northwest's social media and youtube channel: www.youtube.com/@Penn-NorthwestDevCorp.



Penn-Northwest
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Affordable Solutions For Corporate Expansion

MICRO-LOAN PROGRAM

Purpose:

The \$20,000 micro-loan fund is designed to help small business owners access affordable financing for upgrading and improving their operations. This program aims to support business growth and strengthen local economies.

Eligible Applicants:

Including but not limited to; Manufacturing, Industrial, Logistics & Distributions, Advanced Technology, Retail, Services, and Agriculture.

Eligible Use of Funds:

Land acquisition, preparation and associated expenses. Building acquisition, renovation and/or additions. Machinery & equipment purchases. Working capital.

Loan Limit:

Up to \$20,000 depending on project details and location of business.

Rates:

Prime +1
Prime +2
Prime +3

Credit Score:

750+
661-749
600-660

Terms:

All loans will have a maximum term limit of four (4) years.

Fees:

\$260 non-refundable fee with fully completed application. \$500 legal fees.

Conditions:

Owner injection of 10% of total project required. Business plan required. The entire loan amount must be drawn within 30 days of first requisition. Commitment will expire if the loan has not closed within 90 days of approval.

Some Application Requirements:

One year minimum business financial statements/projections, personal guarantee. Additional requirements as needed.

Contact: JAKE RICKERT

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Make it in!
MERCER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Contact The Improvement Movement Team
Penn-Northwest Development Corporation

Penn-Northwest's 2024 Comes to a Close

By Jane Goniea
Photography by Tony Marr,
Clever Marketing

Penn-Northwest Development Corporation wrapped up another exceptional year of economic development in 2024, marking continued growth, momentum, and community impact. From expanding initiatives to strengthening partnerships, Penn-Northwest remains committed to driving progress in Mercer County.

This year's Annual Meeting, held at Thiel College's Beeghly Gymnasium, was a true reflection of that energy and success, bringing together 250 guests and 43 sponsors. The event highlighted key achievements from the 2023-2024 fiscal year, featured a clean audit from McGill, Power, Bell & Associates, and included insights from Brian Slawin of Ben Franklin Technology Partners and Dr. Erin Houston of the Shenango Valley Urban League.

First off, the Governance Committee presented their director nominations for the upcoming fiscal year: Dr. George Garrow, Primary Health Network; David George, Joy Cone Company; Frank Krieder, First National Bank; and Tony Miller, Mercer County Career Center. These were accepted by a unanimous vote.

Executive Director Rod Wilt took the stage to highlight key milestones from the past year, reinforcing Penn-Northwest's role as a catalyst for economic growth. Over the past fiscal year, **21 new industry leads** were generated, **11 prospect proposals** were distributed, and **four site tours** were coordinated, leading to **two new companies** expanding in Mercer County. Penn-Northwest also assisted **27 local businesses** with investment and workforce growth, providing **\$7.5 million** in direct financial, technical, and workforce support. These efforts contributed to the creation or retention of **595 jobs** across the county.

In addition to business development, Penn-Northwest saw continued growth in membership, welcoming **18 new** corporate and individual members and generating a total membership revenue of **\$209,167**. The organization also secured **\$50,000** in foundation support and received **\$620,000** in private and public funding for the Future Leaders and Homegrown Initiative, furthering its commitment to workforce and leadership development in the region.

The Annual Meeting also celebrated individuals and businesses making a meaningful impact in the region. Among this year's honorees were Scott Free of First National Bank and Scott

Kalmanek of Joy Cone Company, who received Lifetime Achievement Awards for their dedication to Penn-Northwest's board and committees. The Improvement Movement Champion Awards recognized Nathan Koble of National Fuel and Jim Bombeck of the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce for their ongoing commitment to Penn-Northwest's mission and contributions to the organization's success.

For its investment in Mercer County, Zekelman Industries received the Local Industry Award, accepted by General Managers Tim and Ned Feeney of Sharon and Wheatland Tube. The New Industry Award was presented to West Winn Urban Ag and Rob Studor, honoring their pioneering work in aquaponics at the Westinghouse building. Finally, the Homegrown Award was presented to Nick Pochiba of Axios Wealth Advisors, recognizing his commitment to local economic growth.

As Penn-Northwest looks ahead, we remain committed to fostering economic development, supporting businesses, and strengthening communities across Mercer County. The success of 2024 is just the beginning, and with the continued dedication of our members, partners, and stakeholders, we are excited for what lies ahead.



Local Industry Awardee Zekelman Industries



Homegrown Awardee Nick Pochiba



Lifetime Achievement
Awardee Scott Free



Improvement Movement
Champion Nathan Koble



Improvement Movement
Champion Jim Bombeck



New Industry Awardee
West Winn Urban Ag

Grove City Borough Improvements

By Anna Kavulla
Photography by Grove City Borough

Since becoming a borough in 1883, Grove City has been committed to improving the community at large. This continues today as the borough currently has many improvement projects underway centralized on beautification, business development, and community advancement.

Firstly, the borough aims to better complement the traditional aesthetics of the downtown, distinct to the borough, by undergoing two major beautification projects. The first of these projects will be restoring the unique Pointing the Way sculptures that are scattered throughout the borough. The ten sculptures were created by George Junior Republic students over a decade ago to symbolize the pursuit of success. The second beautification project is a tree and landscaping project, which will replant

old trees and renew the landscaping around the downtown.

Secondly, Grove City has seen major business development through the expansion of manufacturers like the Hall Industries group, and new businesses come to the area like Clark's Donuts, Wolf Creek Floral, and the relocation of the Wendell August Forge flagship store into the Grove City Outlets.

Finally, the borough is in the process of building a new water treatment plant to serve the community, which is expected to be completed in February of 2025. The facility will process 3 million gallons of water daily, and the borough has received a \$900,000 H2O grant to help fund this project. The borough has also received generous funding for other projects, including a \$500,000 LSA grant for a storm-water improvement project and an additional \$95,000 recycling grant to improve their curbside recycling program.



Introducing Hall Manufacturing Technology

By Jane Goniea
Photography by Jane Goniea

Created in 2023, Hall Manufacturing Technology is a new business entity formed under the Hall Industries ownership group. Hall Industries has been in existence since 1966, when the then-owner and founder Harold G. Hall started the company on Carson Street in Pittsburgh, PA. In 2019, Hall Industries began looking for a building with large crane capacity and stumbled upon the Cooper Bessemer Complex in Grove City, PA. Through the efforts of Tony Kaper, VP of Operations, and Gary Dovey, Penn-Northwest, the building was brought back to life and now houses a few different tenants.

The complex was officially purchased in December of 2020. After the purchase, the Hall Industries ownership group moved its manufacturing business from Ellwood City, PA as well as its aviation assembly shop from Volant, PA to the new facility. These moves have allowed the business group to grow and become more dynamic in their offerings and services. The business entity Hall



Manufacturing Technology was born from this move to Grove City and now occupies 100,000 sq. ft. of the building complex.

Over the last 5 years, the property has undergone extensive testing, clean-up of underutilized areas, and building improvements including a new roof, a new front entrance, office remodeling, and repaired gas lines for heating the building. Additionally, since moving to Grove City, the business was able to purchase machines that have helped to grow the in-house capabilities of the business, such as a new CNC burn table, a Peddinghaus Ocean Avenger CNC Drill Line, a CNC Lincoln Robotic Welder, and a CNC Doosan Mill. They have been able to save money on processes that were previous-

ly done by outside services, as well as processes that boost speed and efficiency.

Hall Industries manufactures bridge components such as downspouts, bridge rail and scuppers for several Department of Transportation across the country. Some of the DOTs they manufacture for are PennDOT, North Carolina, Ohio, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Their aviation shop, Hall Technical Services, manufactures towbars and other aviation support products for the airline industry, with two of their largest customers being Southwest Airlines and United Airlines. They also provide manufacturing support for another Hall business that makes large items for the bulk handling industry such as rotary car dumpers.

Hall has been very active in the community since moving to Grove City. They are members of Penn-Northwest and the Grove City Chamber of Commerce. Hall has donated money to numerous community events such as the Strawberry Days in Grove City, and community improvements such as a fishing dock and volleyball nets at the Grove City Memorial Park. These are just a few things Hall has done since moving to Mercer County. They are very excited to be in Grove City, PA and are looking forward to lots of potential growth in the coming years!

Adapted from an interview and material from Courtney Herdt at Hall Manufacturing Technology, LLC.